

Semi-Pro

Practically every major manufacturer has added a lower line set of drums to accommodate students, semi-pro players and the budget-minded. This special Close-Up looks into some of these lower priced kits marketed by the "famous" names, as well as some manufacturers who specialize in this area.



**COSMIC PERCUSSION CP-P5
COSMIC SUPREME**

Latin Percussion has their own drum line out on the market: Cosmic Percussion. The CP-P5 Cosmic Supreme kit has 9-ply wood shells, and is comprised of a 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 5 1/2x14 metal snare drum. All the drums are fitted with Soundmaster heads.

The 22" bass drum has 16 separate lugs, T-handle tuners, and metal hoops inlaid to match the drum's finish. A felt strip is included for batter head muffling. The spurs are externally mounted, and have a ratchet angle adjustment. An inner leg allows telescoping of the spurs. The tips may be adjusted from rubber to a spike point.

The 8x12 and 9x13 toms have 12 lugs each. The 16" floor tom has 16 lugs and three legs. They all have internal mufflers.

Cosmic Percussion's double tom holder is a replica of Pearl's. The base plate is very similar to Pearl's Vari-Set, accepting separate down posts, and using an indirect clamping method. The arms have ratchet

angle adjustment, and have tabbed memory locks on both ends. As for the holder brackets on the toms, the arm passes through the drum and is secured in the split clamp by indirect pressure. Every section of the holder is very sturdy indeed, and there is enough height to satisfy most drummers.

The toms and bass drum all had good resonance and a full sound. The Soundmaster heads do not provide the optimum sound and tuning range, but they do serve the purpose here.

The snare drum has a chrome-finished metal shell, ten double-ended lugs, an internal muffler, and 20-strand wire snares. The strainer is of the side-throw design, with a fine-adjust knob. Its handle has a fat plastic piece which is molded to fit your fingers, giving a comfortable grip. The snares attach to the throw-off and butt sides with plastic strips. This drum sounded a bit boxy and loose. It was very difficult to get a good crisp sound.

All the stands have single-braced tripods with nylon bushings set into their height joints. One cymbal stand is included. It has two height tiers and a ratchet tilt. The snare stand is the typical basket design and has a ratchet angle adjust.

The hi-hat has a split footboard, and a fat chain linkage. Tension is not adjustable. A hose clamp on the height tube serves as a memory lock. There is a metal plate attached to the front of the stand base, which, when loosened and reversed, has spur points to keep the stand from sliding. The stand has quite good action, but is a bit noisy.

The bass drum pedal also has a split footboard, and uses a woven synthetic flex strap for linkage. Tension relies on double expansion springs, each separately adjustable near the base of the pedal. Two sprung spurs are at the base, and the usual wing screw/plate clamps the pedal to the drum hoop. Overall action is not too bad, but the footboard angle is much too acute. This problem could be solved by substituting a longer strap.

The CP-P5 kit is available in four finishes. It is quite affordable (\$749.50 retail), and does have many professional features.

A lower-priced, lower-quality CP-P35 kit is also available, having a 14x20 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and a six-lug 5x14 wood snare. The stands are lighter in weight, and a thin hex-rod ball-joint tom holder is used. At \$549.50 list, the P35 is best delegated to the young student.



GRETsch BLACKHAWK

Gretsch is another major company with a budget kit. The drums have thick wood shells with a grey Zolacoat-type interior sealer. The kit includes a 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 5 1/2x14 metal snare drum.

The bass drum has 20 lugs, metal hoops and tuners, and does not come with a felt muffling strip. The spurs are external, bent into a forward "L". There are two grooves in the mount plate—one for set-up, and one to pack the spur flush to the shell. The tips may be converted from rubber to steel spike. The drum is fitted with transparent black-dot heads, and since there is no muffling strip, has a bit of "boom" to it.

The 12" and 13" toms have 12 lugs each; the 16" has 16 lugs and three legs with convertible tips. The toms all have internal mufflers. The standard knob will adjust the degree of muffle; a winged collar bolt will then snap the muffler into on or off position. The idea is right, but a few of these were installed crooked, and one didn't

Druimkits

even work. With the black-dot heads, the toms have quite a modern, punchy sound.

A Pearl *Vari-Set* style base plate is used for the tom-tom holder. The arms are like Pearl's old 727 ratchet arms, but are much longer, giving more than enough height. There are memory locks on both arm ends. The holder seems to be a pretty popular one. It sets up easily and is sturdy.

The snare drum has a metal shell with 10 double-ended lugs, and an internal muffler. It has a parallel strainer with fine-tension knobs at both ends. The snares extend past the shell, and there is a thin rod running through the drum. They've gone a bit too far on this strainer, with trying to give a "pro" look. The strainer just doesn't work well. Even at full tension, the snares rattle. It's a good try, but a regular one-sided strainer would be better.

All of the stands with the *Blackhawk* kit have double-braced tripod bases and a locking system. One cymbal stand is included. It has two adjustable tiers and a ratchet tilter, instead of a basket, the snare stand has a tri-arm holder with a moving third arm. The center section and arm grips are sheathed in a hard black plastic. A wing screw will extend or shorten the movable arm for secure clamping onto the drum. Angle adjustment is served by a ratchet, and the entire stand works well to hold the drum in place.

The hi-hat has a fat, split footboard and a two-piece black plastic link. The spring is housed inside the tube and can be adjusted via a drumkey-operated screw which compresses or stretches the spring.

The bass drum pedal has a large split footboard with a huge toe-stop, a single expansion spring stretched upward, a synthetic flex strap, and lever/cam clamping. Frame height is adjustable via two key-operated set screws. Lateral footboard angle will also adjust. The sides of the pedal hold "razor-blade" spurs which slide down when loosened. The action is extremely loose. A different spring would probably cure this problem.

The kit I saw was finished in a very professional-looking silver satin. Other finishes are available. Retail—\$749.50.



LUDWIG STANDARD #986

In the late '60s, Ludwig had a brief run with a moderately-priced drum line—*Ludwig Standard*. The USA-built *Standard* line has since returned to the market. The *Ludwig Standard* kit contains: 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 tom-toms, 16x16 floor tom, 5x14 snare and the 9900 hardware package. The toms and snare are 4-ply wood; the bass drum is 6-ply. All are constructed in Ludwig's die-mold process.

The bass drum has 16 lugs with T-handle tuners and U-style claws. These are the same as on their pro kits. Its wooden hoops are painted black and have an inlay strip matching the drum's finish. One pair of straight, rubber-tipped disappearing spurs is installed, locked in place by a wing screw. A felt damper strip is not included. The drum was fitted with smooth white *Rocker* heads on both sides. These heads give a little more attack and volume than coated heads. The drum has a powerful sound with good volume and depth.

Ludwig's 771 double tom-tom holder is used with this kit—the same holder which preceded their *Modular* system. A diamond-shaped bracket on the bass drum accepts a single down post. The bracket has slots for Ludwig's *Quick-Set* memory lock, but it is not included. A hose clamp is used instead. The height of the down tube is set by a large plastic T-screw which pushes against an inner steel strip. "L"-arms are used to hold the toms. These arms

are adjustable for forward angle and distance apart. Position is set with a hex bolt for which a separate tool is needed. The toms have columnar brackets with an inner "O"-ring. The arms do not pass through the shell, and again, a hex bolt is used to set height. The holder is sturdy enough to bear the full weight of the toms, but all adjustment points must be thoroughly tightened down, or the holder will shake and twist a bit.

The 8x12 and 9x13 toms have 12 lugs each; the 16x16 floor tom has 16 lugs and three legs secured in columnar brackets. All the drums have triple-flanged hoops, but have no mufflers installed. The drums have smooth white *Rocker* heads top and bottom. They all have good resonance along with a pretty pure tone.

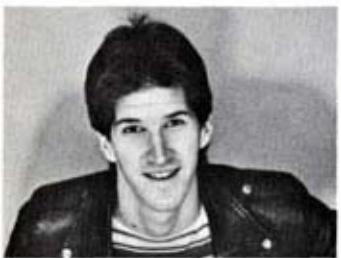
The snare drum is also a wood-shell with a plastic chrome covering. It has eight double-ended lugs and the P85 strainer. This strainer is the same as on the *SupraPhonic* snare drums; thrown off at the side, adjustable via a knurled-edge knob. The 12-strand wire snares have plastic ends and attach with cord. This drum comes fitted with a coated batter head, and does have an internal muffler. This drum sounds crisp and responsive.

All stands in the hardware package have single-braced tripod bases which fold up from the top.

One 1400 cymbal stand is included with the *Standard* kit. It has two adjustable tiers, each set by large, plastic T-screws. The tilter is a small ratchet and also has the large T-screw for adjustment. Ludwig may have made an error here: this T-screw is so large that it is possible it may foul the cymbal, so watch out. The stand is lightweight and will hold cymbals easily without tipping over.

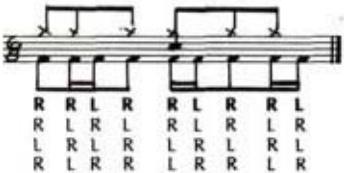
The 1355 snare stand relies on a tri-arm to hold the drum, using a sliding third arm to adjust to various drum diameters. Stand height is set with another of the black T-screws, and a ratchet is used to set angle. For small-sized players, it may be a bit difficult to position the stand perfectly without getting in the way of the pedals, since its base is larger than most others. The stand works easily and holds the drum se-

Chad Wackerman on the DW Double Pedal



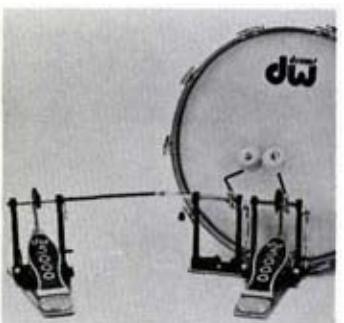
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The 1123 hi-hat operates on a direct pull system with non-adjustable tension. It has a split footboard with no toe stop. Beneath the heel plate is what Ludwig calls *Spur-Lok*: a serrated piece of metal which will anchor the stand to any surface, reducing stand "skating." A hose clamp is used for a memory ring. The clutch is positioned on the rod with yet another big T-screw, which may cause the same problem I described on the cymbal stand, especially if the top cymbal is kept loose. The stand is tall enough for almost anyone and has quite good action with minimum noise.

Ludwig has included the old dependable *Speed King* pedal with the *Standard* kit. It has a one-piece footboard, which may be converted to a semi-split one, and has double post, encased compression springs. Tension is adjustable, and the action always feels just right.

Shell interiors are unlacquered, and the kit is available in five finishes: chrome, red, blue, black and white. On the kit tested, the chrome covering was separating from the shell near the bearing edge on some of the drums.

The *Standard* kit retails at \$1175, but may also be purchased without the hardware package at \$895 list. Yes, the *Standard* line is back, giving drummers a decent quality kit at a decent price.



YAMAHA S252

Yamaha has introduced its own low-priced line: the *Stage Series*. The shells are made of Philippine Mahogany and are constructed using the same *Air-Seal* process that Yamaha uses on its pro drums. The lugs have a triangular shape, and are springless.

Five different set configurations are available in their catalog. Up for test was the seven-piece S252. Components are: 14 x 22 bass drum, 6 1/4 x 8, 8 x 10, 8 x 12, and 9 x 13 toms, 16 x 16 floor tom, 5 x 14 metal snare, and 5 *Series* hardware.

The bass drum has 16 lugs with T-handle tuners and U-style claws. At the bottom two lugs on both sides, the T-handles are replaced with square-head key rods for easier pedal mounting and drum tuning. The wood hoops are painted in a matte black finish, and a rubber piece is glued to

the batter hoop bottom. The spurs are merely straight rods which will disappear into the shell. A felt strip is fitted behind the batter head, but the drum is still very ringy. The coated heads are produced by Yamaha themselves in Japan. They hold up well, but give a thinner tone than Remo coated heads do.

Mounted on the bass drum is the *TH-51W* tom holder, which is essentially a scaled-down version of its big brother *TH-91W*. A single down post passes through a raised base block. This block uses indirect clamping to secure post height, and has a black nylon bushing ring inside. Atop the post is a simplified *TH-91W* holder, using the ball and cage system with protruding hex arms. Here, the ball holder is a double clamp, leaving much of the hard resin ball exposed. Practically any angle is available due to the smooth movement of the ball. The cage uses wing bolts to clamp the ball into position. A hexagonal opening in the tom bracket accepts the holder arm, which is also hexagonal in shape. The main benefit of this shape is to keep the drums from twisting out of position. The entire holder is sturdy and easy to set-up.

The 8 x 12 and 9 x 13 toms have 12 lugs each; the 16 x 16 has 16 lugs and three legs. They all have triple-flanged hoops and no mufflers.

The 8" and 10" drums are a special-package set with floor stand (catalogued as *WT-500*). They are available as an addition to any *Stage Series* kit, and are used here to make a seven-piece set-up. The 8" has five double-ended lugs, while the 10" has six. Like the others, they come without internal mufflers.

Yamaha's own coated heads are fitted to all the toms. The drums have good resonance, but the Yamaha heads make it a bit difficult to tune the toms to a lower-than-normal pitch. As with the bass drum, a thin sound prevailed. Without any damping, the overtones are hard to control. However, Yamaha makes optional external mufflers in two sizes.

The snare has a seamless metal shell and eight double-ended lugs. It has a side-throw strainer which is adjustable at the throw-off side only. The snares attach to the strainer with glass-tape strips instead of cord; a good move, since the tape will not stretch or break as easily as cord. Again, there is no muffler included. This drum is responsive, and has a wide sound capability.

Two *CS-510* cymbal stands are included with this *Stage* kit. They have single-braced tripods, two adjustable tiers, and small ratchet tilters. The stands are lightweight, but sturdy. A heavier *CS-712* boom is also in the hardware package, having a single-braced tripod, larger ratchet tilter, and two adjustable tiers. This boom stand can also be easily converted to a straight stand, since the boom arm will telescope into the top tier (giving three adjustable tiers).

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Boom angle is adjusted via a ratchet, and the arm itself is 13" long. The CS-712 is very impressive!

The SS-510 snare stand has a single-braced tripod base, as well. It features a dropped basket which will accommodate deeper drums quite easily. The stand clamps to the drum using a long T-screw at the basket's bottom to close the arms. A Hat hinge adjusts angle. Like all Yamaha hardware, this stand is well-designed.

The HS-510 hi-hat has a tripod base, split footboard, and a plastic link. Tension is not adjustable, but the stand has good action. A hose clamp is fitted onto the height tube, and there is a nylon bushing at the joint.

Yamaha's FP-510 pedal also has a split footboard, along with double posts, and a single expansion spring stretched downward. Tension is adjusted at the bottom of the spring holder. A fibre/nylon strap is used for linkage. There are not too many adjustments on this pedal, but all in all, it works fine.

Presently, the Stage Series kits are available in black, white and red. Yamaha does allow options of purchasing the entire kit with or without hardware, with different sized bass drums, etc. The 5252 retails at \$1255. Without the 8" and 10" toms, it becomes the S152.



SLINGERLAND SPIRIT 1000

Slingerland has imported its own kit in the form of the *Spirit* 1000. Its shells are dark sealer. The kit includes: 14x22 bass drum (5 ply), 8x12 and 9x13 toms, 16x16 floor tom (all 3 ply), 5x14 metal-shell snare, and hardware. Here, the plies of a drum don't really mean anything, as the 3-ply toms still have a good thickness to them.

The bass drum has 16 lugs, T-style tensioners, and channeled metal hoops inlaid in the drum's finish. A felt muffler strip is installed behind the batter head. The spurs are the same as Slingerland's pro model. They angle a bit forward, have spiked metal ends and will disappear into the drum. Coated heads are fitted on both sides (presumably *Ambassadors*, since

they have metal hoops, not epoxy like the *Soundmasters*.) This bass drum had a nice punchy characteristic, with good volume.

Mounted near the front of the bass drum is the tom-tom holder base plate. It has two holes, each accepting a single arm. The holder grips the tom-tom arms with split clamps. The arms have ratchet angle adjustment (done with a large T-belt) and have a large ratchet casting. The brackets on the toms are similar to Pearl's *Vari-Set*, utilizing smaller scale split clamps. Memory locks are fitted on both arm ends. These arms, being quite long, do allow more than ample set-up height. This holder seems to be the most popular with this class of drumkits, and with good reason—it is very sturdy and certainly will not sink or twist.

The 12" and 13" toms have 12 lugs each; the 16" floor tom has 16 lugs and three legs. There are no internal mufflers, and they all have Slingerland's unique curved hoops. The drums are fitted with coated *Anibassador-type* heads. All the toms had very good tone and fullness.

The *Spirit 1000* snare is a 5 x 14 metal-shell model having eight double-ended lugs, and a side-throw strainer. The strainer can be fine-tuned at the throw-off side, and operates very easily. This drum does have an internal muffler. A coated batter head is fitted—this one (like the snare side) has epoxy hoops, so I assume it is a *Soundmaster*. The drum had a somewhat thin, papery sound with the stock heads. It was responsive, though, and gave a pretty loud rim shot!

All of the *Spirit* hardware is Japanese import. The stands have single-braced tripod bases, and black nylon guard bushings recessed into their height joints.

Two boom cymbal stands are included. They have one adjustable tier, and a ratchet tilter. The angle/length of the boom arm is adjustable via a ratchet/eye bolt. A threaded, black counterweight is at the end of the boom arm. These stands will quite easily hold any cymbal without tipping over. This kit is the only one reviewed that supplies boom stands instead of regular straight ones.

The hi-hat has a split chrome footboard with an adjustable toe stop, plus an externally-housed spring. Tension is adjusted at the top of the spring cylinder—very easy to get at. There is a knurled knob spur at the base, and a memory lock on the height tube which fits over the entire joint. Action is smooth and responsive, while the stand itself is rock-solid.

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The snare stand is of the popular basket-type, adjusted by a carriage ring on a threaded shaft. It has ratchet angle adjustment and holds the drum securely at any angle.

The *Spirit* bass drum pedal has a split footboard with toe stop, and an adjustable expansion spring stretched upward from the pedal frame. Length of stroke can be adjusted by loosening two set screws. A thick, pliable strap is used for linkage, and the pedal mounts to the hoop using the common screw-operated plate clamp. Action is a little slow on this pedal, but it is quiet and does have a lot of desirable pro features.

The *Spirit 1000* kit is available in either black, white or blue covering, and retails at \$1100. For the beginner, it has great quality and, might even be useful as a back-up kit for the pro.

Slingerland also offers other *Spirit* series kits in various configurations, all at a pretty unbelievable value. In fact, the *Spirit 1000* kit can be ordered with square-dimension "megatoms" and a power bass drum for only an extra \$40.00.



HONDO HP-525

Hondo is a relatively new name on the drumset scene, distributed by International Music Corp. in Texas. The shells are 6-ply maple and mahogany. Components of the Hondo *HP-525* are: 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 tom-toms, 16x16 floor tom, and 5 1/2 x 14 metal snare drum.

The bass drum has 16 lugs, T-style tensioners, and metal hoops. The interior of the shell is spray-coated with a grey-colored sealant. A pair of disappearing spurs is fitted onto the drum. These spurs are straight steel and have convertible tips from rubber cones to spike points. The drum is fitted with Remo *Soundmaster* heads, and Hondo neglected to include a felt muffler strip for the batter side. The drum has a lot of attack, but it was sort of difficult to get a low-pitched sound out of it.

At the top of the bass drum shell is a large, four-cornered base plate receiver for the tom holder down tube. The down tube is thick, has a tabbed memory ring, and is secured at the base plate with a T-screw.

To hold the toms, the holder uses knurled L-arms, which adjust via a ratchet. These arms also have memory height rings, and there are reference grooves cut into the ratchet for angle setting. The drums have rectangular receivers, tightened with T-screws. Hondo's tom-tom holder is similar to Tama's holder, and is very stable while affording a variety of angle settings.

The 12" and 13" toms have 12 lugs each; the floor tom has 16. The floor tom also has three legs which fit into castings that resemble the tom-tom receivers. The legs have convertible tips with large lock washers. Each drum has a knob-operated internal damper. Remo *Soundmaster* heads are fitted on all the toms. The drums did have a thin sound, but had ample volume.

The snare drum has eight double-ended lugs, 20-strand snares, and a chrome finish. The strainer is of the "stick-shift" type, and is connected with plastic strips. On this particular drum, the snares rattled excessively, making it impossible for me to get a crisp sound.

All of the stands with the *HP-525* have tripod bases and nylon bushings set into their height joints. The cymbal stand has two adjustable tiers, and a ratchet tilter. The hi-hat has a hinged-heel footboard, an internal spring, and nylon linkage. The top of the rod is knurled to give the clutch a better grip. Action was okay, but I found the spring itself to be very noisy.

The bass drum pedal's footboard matches the hi-hat. It has a metal linkage, and adjustable double expansion springs. Stroke is not adjustable. The pedal's action was rough, and it has a rather big footboard for its tiny frame.

The snare stand works fine, using a basket with carriage ring to hold the drum.

Hondo's *HP-525* kit is available in black, white, silver metallic, and gold metallic for \$650.00 list. On this particular kit, the covering seam on the floor tom was separating. And, unlike the usual tacked or glued badges, these drums have *decals*. The *HP-525* would make a good starter kit.

It must be noted that, for some unknown reason, drum companies do not include drum thrones. However, practically every manufacturer has its own model throne available.

For those of you looking for a first drumkit, or even a second back-up kit, these models are ideal—giving decent quality at a price that won't burn out your bank account.

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